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ABSTRACT

The literary works of four American women who lived before 1900 deserve to be introduced, if not reintroduced, to the study of literature in the United States, because of their literary merit, variety, and valuable contributions to American literary history. In a journal edited from a diary kept during a round-trip horseback journey from Boston to New York, Sarah Kemble Knight (1666-1727) wrote in the tradition of Puritan diarists, with a delightful sense of humor. The able literary critic, Margaret Fuller (1810-1850), composed distinctly original essays and literary reviews, while her contemporary, Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902), formulated many of the feminist principles which Susan B. Anthony (a close friend) and other feminists made famous, edited the "History of Woman Suffrage," and explained her radical feminism in an autobiography. In a speech delivered at an 1851 women's rights convention, Sojourner Truth (1797-1883) eloquently pointed out the flaws in the logic of preceding male speakers and persuasively argued for equal rights and privileges for women. In reading these and other works of American women, women may come to think of themselves as members of a full and equal half of the human species. (JM)

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LITERARY FOREMOTHERS REDISCOVERED: KNIGHT, FULLER, STANTON, AND SOJOURNER TRUTH

When I first planned this presentation, I envisioned it as a coherent collection of scholarly notes on Americans who have wrongly been called "authoresses" and who, as a result, have had their writings closeted somewhere in the library's "storage" collection. (At my school, this storage collection is housed in the same building as the urinals that were removed from some residence halls when the university became coeducational.)

My original intention has not changed radically: I want to re-introduce you to several women whose writing is worthy of notice on its own merits. The secret problem is: I may not be re-introducing you, but just plain introducing you for the first time to women authors about whom you have probably heard little if anything.

First comes Sarah Kemble Knight, reputed by one of my former students' former high school teacher to have been Benjamin Franklin's mistress. Let me clear that up at once, lest you marvel at Ben's precocity: Madam Knight included among her many occupations that of a schoolteacher, she had a school in Boston early in the eighteenth

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century, and young Benjamin Franklin just may have been one of her pupils. That is, Sarah Kemble Knight may have been Ben Franklin's schoolmistress. (One may wonder what influence she had on him, if she was indeed his teacher, but that kind of speculation is another matter altogether.)

Next comes Margaret Fuller, whom the Library of Congress puts in the O's because she happened to have married a young Italian marquis, Angelo d'Ossoli. If you want to find her works--if your library has them--go straight to Ossoli instead of being referred there by the card that says "Margaret Fuller." Fuller may have been a prototype of the later American expatriates; she left the United States after some acrimonious relations with Emerson and his transcendentalist circle and after two successful years of reviewing and writing criticism for the New York Tribune. When she returned to the United States with her husband and young child, the ship on which she was a passenger foundered off the coast of Long Island in a storm and sank; ironically, the only body that was recovered was that of the "marchesa"'s child. Fuller herself drowned, or voluntarily submitted to the stormy seas--we can never know.

(There is a vague rumor that Fuller swam secretly to shore, stealthily made her way inland to Amherst, Massachusetts, and secluded herself to write poetry under the pen name of Emily Dickinson. This would be an amusing and provocative rumor if it did not seriously question the fact that nineteenth-century America had room for more than one woman of genius.)

Then comes Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who was not mentioned in her husband's lengthy Memoirs but who was remembered by her son Theodore when he named his first daughter "Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Jr." In my frustration caused by looking in vain for a full collection of her writings in two libraries, I began to ask women if they had ever heard of Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Blank looks. When I said "and Susan B. Anthony?" the few positive responses were "Oh, yeah, they had something to do with women and voting, right?" I am still amazed, and the more so when I learned that the first book by Stanton was put in our library's half-million-volume collection only this past September.

Finally comes Frances Gage's transcript of one of the speeches of Sojourner Truth. Though I make no claim for Sojourner Truth's

being in the same literary league with Knight, Fuller, and Stanton, the speech she delivered in Akron in the spring of 1851 is, in my estimation, a piece of oratory that can compare favorably with Abraham Lincoln's better orations. And--well, how many of you have heard of Sojourner Truth?--I want to conclude my presentation by an attempt to do justice to one of the most eloquent speeches I have ever read.

I say that I planned at first a scholarly presentation. Alas, it has by this time become a minor tirade against the anthologizers. You may decide for yourselves whether or not Sojourner's oratory deserves a place in American literature anthologies, a place similar to that usually given to Lincoln's Gettysburg and Second Inaugural Addresses. And, while Sarah Kemble Knight's Journal is represented by some excerpts in the two-volume edition of the Norton Anthology, not even a tiny sentence of hers is to be found in the one-volume Shorter Edition. And, no matter how many volumes the edition has, Stanton and Fuller are not to be found, and their omission is all the stranger since their works are clearly in the public domain and would cost the publishers nothing if they chose to include

them. So I suspect that I am introducing rather than re-introducing; I hope my suspicion is incorrect, and that you will forgive the rather fundamental nature of my comments.

There are two sources of unity for the comments that follow. First, each of the works I shall be mentioning is literature worth the reading, but literature which remains for the most part unread; that is to say, I call these works to your attention not because they are the products of women so much as because they are in themselves good examples of language expertly used. Second, the literary works do not fall into the usual categories of what we consider "literature." Knight's contribution is a journal, Fuller's are critical essays, Stanton's are speeches and reminiscences, and Sojourner Truth's is an extemporaneous oration (for knowledge of which we are deeply in the debt of Frances Gage--especially for Gage's attempt to capture the Black inflections of the language she recorded).

The first source of unity (which rather too quickly departs when the particular works are scrutinized) is really an excuse to get these works by women into one paper. The second unifying characteristic is one that is especially interesting. When we

teach the usual courses--"Survey of American Literature," "American Literature Before the Civil War," "Major American Writers," and the like--we find ourselves having to decide whether or not we will begin the course with Poe (whose stories and poems are unquestionably literature; they even belong to established literary genres). If we choose to go earlier--almost two hundred years earlier--we find the poets Bradstreet and Taylor and Wigglesworth but then little else that can fit into established literary genres and safely be called "literary." Bradford's Of Plymouth Plantation, Winthrop's Journal, Sewall's Diary, the voluminous and varied writings of Cotton Mather, and the basically religious character of Jonathan Edwards' sermons and Personal Narrative all seem historical data rather than actual documents of literary history. Because the works I choose to deal with are similar with respect to literary genre, they fit into what is basically a discontinuous "continuity"; they fit into the mainstream of what our national literature was before the mid-nineteenth-century renaissance happened. In other words, the works by the women I have named are not peripheral to American literature; instead, they are examples--in some respects

like Walden and Nature, which similarly do not fit into neat generic pigeonholes--of what the actual mainstream of American literature was before our really national literature began in midcentury as if in answer to Emerson's "cultural declaration of independence" in "The American Scholar" of 1837. If we exclude Knight because her Journal was written so early, we may even see that the works by Fuller, Stanton, and Sojourner Truth are doubly "American." They are, in form, unoriginal continuations of colonial writing practices, yet they are, in content, as specifically "American" as one can expect a work to be.

Before there was a true American literature, there was Sarah Kemble Knight. She was born in Boston in 1666; she died in 1727. Two characteristics that make her a prototypical "Yankee woman" are that she was married to a sea-captain and was widowed at a relatively early age, and that she fell back on her own resources and continued to live a comfortable and interesting life of her own. We remember her chiefly for the Journal she made from the diary she kept during her journey from Boston to New York City and back, a journey during the probably worst months of the year. Though she

journeyed during the winter of 1704-1705, her Journal was not published until 1825, so she, like Edward Taylor, had to be "discovered." Unlike Taylor, she still has to be "discovered."

I think that The Journal of Madam Knight needs to be considered from two points of view. First, we should approach it as the kind of thing many New Englanders wrote and remember that, when she was on horseback in the wilderness between Boston and New York, Jonathan Edwards (b. 1703) was scarcely a toddler. We should also remember that Sarah Kemble Knight and Cotton Mather were almost exact contemporaries: he was born three years before she was and died only one year after her death.

The Puritan tradition of keeping diaries and journals stems from the belief that both great books--the Book of Nature as well as the more literally bookish Bible--needed to be interpreted in order to ascertain, or at least guess with a little bit less error, whether or not one was among God's elect. Whenever I teach the first half of the American literature survey, I always team Knight with Samuel Sewall. Like Knight, he was a Puritan in metamorphosis; by the end of his diary, which he kept from 1674 until 1729 (the year before his

death), he has become a Yankee with only lingering traces of Puritan ideology evident. Because of the length of time his diary spans, it is a nearly perfect demonstration of the changing character of the New Englander.

Most excerpts of Sewall's Diary begin with his being a fairly typical Puritan: he notes that the windows of a house newly built .. .. .. had all been broken during a storm, and then muses on what supernatural meanings this "page" from "the Book of Nature" might have for persons like himself; obviously, he infers, the persons connected with building that house had in some way gotten themselves into God's disfavor. As the years progress, Sewall becomes more and more secular: late in life, he courts several ladies before being met with success. It is natural that he should, as a good Puritan, record these courtships, but it is revealing that, as a real Yankee tradesman, he records to the penny every expenditure he makes for each lady whose hand he seeks. He notes that he paid just so much for a bag of sweetmeats, just that much for some candies, that he tipped the stable boy with two pence, and finally, when one of the ladies pronounces a firm "no" in answer to his offer of matrimony (which offer was, by the way, a planned wedding of fortunes as well as of

persons), he remarks to himself in his diary that she had, after all, the habit of wearing dirty gloves.

The interval spanned by Sewall's Diary lets us see the gradual evolution of the Yankee from the Puritan. Madam Knight's Journal of a mere five months does not. Only at the very end does her prose become "typically Puritan," and I suspect that her last sentence is what it is more because it furnishes a nice rhetorical conclusion than because it demonstrates her true religious fervor. The last sentence of Knight's Journal is: "But desire sincearly to adore my Great Benefactor for thus graciously carying and returning in safety his unworthy handmaid."

This paper was delivered orally. To facilitate reading it, the spelling, capitalization, and punctuation of the original Journal have been modernized.

Although this last sentence seems to demonstrate that Knight was writing in the tradition of Puritan diarists, it is most notable because it does not seem to fit in place. Sarah Kemble Knight does not seem to fit in place, either. She was thirty-eight years old when she rode from Boston to New York and back again. For most of the journey, she rode on horseback (and sidesaddle, as befit the proprieties of the time; but think: about three hundred miles on horseback, and having to ride sidesaddle as an added hardship). For a good part of the journey, she was unaccompanied except by

strangers whom she hired as guides to the next inn or stopping-place.

The physical facts of her journey make us admire her; here is the Boston ancestor of the pioneer women who would cross the Great American Desert in Conestoga wagons or on foot pushing wheelbarrows in front of them. And the physical fact of her Journal, obviously edited into the form of a journal from the looser and more private form of a diary, is worthy of admiration, too; here is a woman, "unworthy handmaid" that she claims to be, who had enough "ego-strength" to make a public record of her own noteworthy adventure.

And finally--at this point we must look upon Knight's Journal from the other point of view--there is the literary fact. We look upon The Journal of Madam Knight instead of that of Madam Winthrop or Macey or any number of contemporaries because of its literary excellence and its charming peculiarities. Because it was not published until nearly a century after her death, Knight's Journal keeps her original spellings (and in some cases they are original!), which enliven what is anyway sprightly, humorous prose.

The one aspect of literary excellence I want to emphasize is the delightful sense of humor that pervades the Journal. When we think of riding sidesaddle, most of us wince; when we attire ourselves

(imaginatively) in the long skirts that women of that time wore, and then experience vicariously the fording of winter-cold New England rivers and streams, we are hardly moved to good humor, much less to laughter. But Sarah Kemble Knight selected from her diary and from her personality aspects which become the persona who is the "real author" of The Journal of Madam Knight. The results of this mediating "author" are what make the Journal literature. Unfortunately, much of the humor is not apparent in what I read to you orally, for the Journal was meant to be read as a book is meant to be read: visually, so that the formation of puns and antitheses and the vagaries of spelling add to the reader's pleasure. But here, judge for yourselves:

". . . it being now near sunset. But the Post [her guide] told me we had near 14 miles to ride to the next stage [the stopping-place], where we were to lodge. I asked him of the rest of the road, foreseeing we must travail in the night. He told me there was a bad river we were to ride through, which was so very fierce a horse could sometimes hardly stem it: but it was narrow, and we should soon be over. I cannot express the concern of mind this relation set me in. No thoughts but those of the dang'rous river could entertain my imagination, and they

were as formidable as various, still tormenting me with blackest ideas of my approaching fate; sometimes seeing myself drowning, otherwhiles drowned, and at the best like a holy sister just come out of a spiritual bath in dripping garments.

"Now was the glorious luminary, with his swift coursers arrived at his stage [the sun had set], leaving poor me with the rest of this part of the lower world in darkness, with which we were soon surrounded. The only glimmering we now had was from the spangled skies, whose imperfect reflections rendered every object formidable. Each lifeless trunk, with its shattered limbs, appeared an armed enemy; and every little stump like a ravenous devourer. Nor could I so much as discern my guide, when at any distance, which added to the terror.

"Thus, absolutely lost in thought, and dying with the very thoughts of drowning, I come up with the post, who I did not see till even with his horse. He told me he stopped for me, and we rode on very deliberately a few paces, when we entered a thicket of trees and shrubs and I perceived by the horse's going, we were on the descent of a hill, which, as we came nearer the bottom, 'twas totally dark with the trees that surrounded it. But I knew by the going of the horse we had entered

the water, which my guide told me was the hazardous river he had told me of. And he, riding up close to my side, bid me not fear--we should be over immediately. I now rallied all the courage I was mistress of, knowing that I must either venture my fate of drowning, or be left like the children in the wood. So, as the post bid me, I gave reins to my nag; and sitting as steady as just before in the canoe [which they had used to get across an even more formidable river], in a few minutes got safe to the other side, which he told me was the Narragansett country."

What we have here is a literary amalgam of the stereotypically frightened woman and the very much individuated intellect that could look upon the experience with sufficient disinterest to be able to exaggerate the fears and terrors of the woods and waters to comic proportions.

Later, Knight takes advantage of the name of the owner of a house along the route, a Mr. Devills (two ells), to play on the pun. ". . . the post encouraged me, by saying we should be well accommodated anon at Mr. Devills, a few miles further. But I questioned whether we ought to go to the Devil to be helped out of affliction. However, like the rest of deluded souls that post to the infernal den, we made

all possible speed to this devil's habitation. . . . [Mr. Devills, however, was not so hospitable as the guide had assumed, for] no, or none, was the replies he made us to our demands. He differed only this from the old fellow in t'other country; he let us depart."

The day before this literary descent into hell, Knight calls on one of several of her excuses for the making of a poem. (After leaving Mr. Devills' she wrote a didactic poem to admonish other travelers.) When she wrote it, it was "occasional"; when her Journal was published, it could be called, in a romantic way, self-expressive; and now, we can say that her poem was therapeutic: "[After dinner] I then betook me to my apartment, which was a little room parted from the kitchen by a single board partition; where . . . I went to bed, which, though pretty hard, yet neat and handsome. But I could get no sleep, because of the clamor of some of the town tope-ers in next room, who were entered into a strong debate concerning the signification of the name of their country, . . . with such a roaring voice and thundering blows of the fist of wickedness on the table, that it pierced my very head. I heartily fretted, and wished 'em tongue-tied; but . . . they kept calling for tother gill, which while they were swallowing, was some intermission. But presently,

like oil to fire, increased the flame. I set my candle on a chest by the bedside, and setting up, fell to my old way of composing my resentments, in the following manner:

> I ask thy aid, O potent rum!
> To charm these wrangling topers dum.
> Thou hast their giddy brains possessed--
> The man confounded with the beast--
> And I, poor I, can get no rest.
> Intoxicate them with thy fumes:
> O still their tongues till morning comes! "

I have not time to comment further on Knight's Journal but only to recommend it as a most delightful work to read in the midst of your reading and teaching the less secular and witty writers of the time.

"Truth is the nursing mother of genius. No man can be absolutely true to himself, eschewing cant, compromise, servile imitation, and complaisance, without becoming original, for there is in every creature a fountain of life which, if not choked back by stones and other dead rubbish, will create a fresh atmosphere and bring to life fresh beauty. And it is the same with the nation as with the individual man." Most of us, if asked on the spot, would

say that those sentences sound like Emerson's. They do, but they are the sentences of Margaret Fuller. And I think they are unconsciously autobiographical, for if she had not been "choked back by stones and other dead rubbish" she might have risen to an eminence similar to that enjoyed by Emerson himself.

Let me say briefly that the "stones and other dead rubbish" that "choked back" the genius of Margaret Fuller were largely matters of gender-role prejudice and personal egotism on the parts of most of the men in Emerson's circle. Only Nathaniel Hawthorne--who stands out in this context as being one of the very few great and happily married American authors--only Nathaniel Hawthorne gave Fuller the compliment she deserved. He overlooked her deficiencies in feminine beauty and saw the fineness of her mind and soul, and created after Fuller's spiritual likeness the brilliant and beautiful Zenobia of his Blythedale Romance. Having relieved myself of that one feminist complaint, I can turn to Fuller's real achievement as a woman of letters and literary critic of the mid-nineteenth century.

The quotation I read earlier comes from her essay "American Literature," published in Papers on Literature and Art in 1846.

The first sentence of that essay reveals her acuity in matters literary. "Some thinkers may object to this essay [American literature], that we are about to write of that which has as yet no existence." Like Emerson, she too was waiting for a truly national literature to happen and, in a review of Emerson's Essays which appeared in the New York Daily Tribune on December 7, 1844, she too seems to be prophesying the literary arrival of Walt Whitman. She writes in that review of "essays which will lead to great and complete poems--somewhere." Unfortunately, she died five years before the publication of Leaves of Grass.

With the exception of Woman in the Nineteenth Century (1845), incidentally the first and still a major philosophical definition of specifically American feminism, the greater part of Fuller's most significant work is scattered about in short essays and reviews. Thus, because I am regarding her as a woman of letters and not as a protofeminist, my comments about her works will be somewhat atomistic, as comments on individual essays and reviews are bound to be. I shall try to give them some unity--or at least coherence--by beginning with some interesting observations that Fuller made and then moving on to

what can almost be called her organic theory of poetry.

In her July 1846 review of Charles Brockden Brown's Ormond and Weiland, Fuller draws attention to the characterization in the novels: "it increases our own interest in Brown that, a prophet in this respect of a better era, he has usually placed this thinking, royal mind in the body of a woman. This personage too is always feminine, both in her character and circumstances, but a conclusive proof that the term 'feminine' is not a symonym for 'weak.'" In the same review, she notes that the typical male character "of Brown and Godwin has not eaten of the fruit of the tree of knowledge and been driven to sustain himself by sweat of his brow for nothing, but has learned the structure and laws of things, and become a being rational, benignant, various, and desirous of supplying the loss of innocence by the attainment of virtue. So his woman need not be quite so weak as Eve, the slave of feeling or of flattery: she also has learned to guide her helm amid the storm across the troubled waters." So we see that Fuller is not only a feminist and a critic, but a feminist critic as well.

She was also a prophet; at least, with our professional dismay

at the national epidemic of functional illiteracy and the effects on the American public imagination of non-print media, we can consider her a prophet. Writing in her essay "American Literature," Fuller observes that the "life of intellect is becoming more and more determined to the weekly and daily papers [probably a nineteenth-century analogue of our own Eleven O'Clock News programs], whose light leaves fly so rapidly and profusely over the land." Later in that essay she seems almost to foretell the importance of a free press, the importance of which we are still learning, since we saw that the press for the most part dethroned a president who dared not let himself be impeached. Fuller writes of journalism: "The confidence in uprightness of intent and the safety of truth is still more needed here than in the more elaborate kinds of writing, as meanings cannot fully explained nor expressions revised. Newspaper-writing is next door to conversation, and should be conducted on the same principles. It has this advantage: we address not our neighbor, who forces us to remember his limitations and prejudice, but the ideal presence of human nature as we feel it ought to be and trust it will be. We address America rather than Americans."

And Margaret Fuller was a literary critic. In her review of Longfellow's Poems of 1845, she subjects his poem-making to a test against her formidable criteria; one cannot help wondering if this review--or perhaps the content of the review rediscovered many times by many persons since her time--was an active cause of the decline of Longfellow in the literary pantheon. Though Fuller is pejorative, she is witty. "Mr. Longfellow has been accused of plagiarism. We have been surprised that anyone should have been anxious to fasten special charges of this kind upon him, when we had supposed it so obvious that the greater part of his mental stores were derived from the works of others. He has no style of his own growing out of his own experiences and observations of nature. Nature with him, whether human or external, is always seen through the windows of literature. There are in his poems sweet and tender passages descriptive of his personal feelings, but very few showing him as an observer at first hand of the passions within or the landscape without."

And even though she damns his poetry, she does not condemn the man, nor even the poet. "We must confess to a coolness towards Mr. Longfellow, in consequence of the exaggerated praises that have been

bestowed upon him. When we see a person of moderate powers receive honors which should be reserved for the highest, we feel somewhat like assailing him and taking from him the crown which should be reserved for grander brows. And yet this is perhaps ungenerous. It may be that the management of publishers, the hyperbole of paid or undiscerning reviewers, or some accidental cause which gives a temporary interest to productions beyond what they would permanently command, have raised such a one to a place as much above his wishes as he claims, and which he would rejoice with honorable modesty to vacate at the approach of one worthier. We the more readily believe this of Mr. Longfellow."

Finally, Margaret Fuller's remarks here and there can be brought together as a fairly coherent theory of literature, set solidly in the romantic tradition. "Poetry is not a superhuman or supernatural gift. It is on the contrary the fullest and therefore most completely natural expression of what is human. It is that of which the rudiments lie in every human breast, but developed to a more complete existence than the obstructions of daily life permit, clothed in an adequate form, domesticated in nature by the use of apt images, the perception of

grand analogies, and set to the music of the spheres for the delight of all who have ears to hear." She seems to echo Shelley when she writes that "All the poets are the priests of Nature, though the greatest are also the prophets of the manhood of man."

A true romantic, Fuller even uses the now-familiar metaphor of the "lamp" (familiar to us now because of M. H. Abrams' book on nineteenth-century British romanticism). Complaining that at her time everyone, it seemed, thought him- or herself a poet, she notes that "The rules of versification are now understood and used by those who have never entered into that soul from which meters grow as acorns from the oak, shapes as characteristic of the parent tree, containing in like manner germs of limitless life for the future. And as to the substance of these jingling rhymes and dragging, stumbling rhythms, we might tell of bombast or still worse an affected simplicity, sickly sentiment, or borrowed dignity; but it is sufficient to comprise all in this one censure. The writers did not write because they felt obliged to relieve themselves of the swelling thought within, but as an elegant exercise which may win them rank and reputation above the crowd. Their lamp is not lit by the sacred and inevitable lightning

from above, but carefully fed by their own will to be seen of men."

Since Margaret Fuller is in the mainstream of American criticism already, and needs only more attention to her critical theory to attain the status she deserves, I shall now turn to a woman rarely if ever considered a significant American writer.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton was born only five years after Margaret Fuller, in 1815, and lived, fortunately for us all, until 1902. To many it may seem sad that her genius was quickened by early and continuous gender-role discrimination, and that one of her life-long attributes was a chip on her shoulder which, it seems, she enlarged the physical dimensions of her body to bear the more comfortably. Yes, Elizabeth Cady Stanton was fat, at least in her maturity, a visible complement to the almost gaunt figure of her friend for more than half a century, Susan B. Anthony. The two of them were complementary in many other ways as well. Mrs. Stanton (I use the Mrs. deliberately), obviously, was married; Susan Anthony remained a single person for life. Mrs. Stanton, as wife and mother, was for much of her life confined at home, while Susan Anthony, free of such domestic responsibilities, could travel the country, calling conven-

tions, raising money, organizing women, and delivering speeches. But Mrs. Stanton was the contemplative half of the team; it was she who formulated many of the feminist principles that Anthony and others were to make famous. Susan Anthony and other contemporary feminists depended on Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

In a letter of June 5th, 1856, Anthony wrote to Mrs. Stanton: "Oh, dear, dear! There is so much to say and I am so without constructive power to put [it] in symmetrical order. So, for the love of me and for the saving of the reputation of womanhood, I beg you . . . set yourself about the work. . . . Now will you load my gun, leaving me to pull the trigger and let fly the powder and ball? . . . Do get all on fire and be as cross as you please." For many years thereafter, their partnership grew, in depth as well as in the public eye.

In her autobiographical reminiscences, Fifty Years and More (1898), Elizabeth Cady Stanton tells us about one of the origins of her radical feminism. "When I was eleven years old, . . . my only brother, who had just graduated from Union College, came home to die. A young man of great talent and promise, he was the pride of my father's heart. We early felt that this son filled a larger place in our

father's affections and future plans than the five daughters together. Well do I remember how tenderly he watched my brother in his last illness. . . . I still recall, too, going into the large darkened parlor to see my brother, and finding the casket, mirrors, and pictures all draped in white, and my father seated by his side, pale and immovable. As he took no notice of me, after standing a long while, I climbed upon his knee, when he mechanically put his arm about me and, with my head resting against his beating heart, we both sat in silence. . . . At length he heaved a deep sigh and said: 'Oh, my daughter, I wish you were a boy!' Throwing my arms around his neck, I replied: 'I will try to be all my brother was.'

"Then and there I resolved that I would not give so much time as heretofore to play, but would study and strive to be at the head of all my classes and thus delight my father's heart. . . . I thought that the chief thing to be done in order to equal boys was to be learned and courageous. So I decided to study Greek and learn to manage a horse."

She wanted the approval of her father, and she determined to get it by attaining the qualities he evidently thought so important.

She gave all her physical energy to learning to ride, "and made rapid progress. I surprised even my teacher, who thought me capable of doing anything. I learned to drive, and to leap a fence and ditch on horseback. I taxed every power, hoping some day to hear my father say: 'Well, a girl is as good as a boy, after all.' But he never said it."

She studied Greek so earnestly and well that she was the best in the class except for one older boy. "For three years one boy kept his place at the head of the class, and I always stood next. Two prizes were offered in Greek. I stove for one and took the second. How well I remember my joy in receiving that prize. There was no sentiment of ambition, rivalry, or triumph over my companions, nor feeling of satisfaction in receiving this honor in the presence of those assembled on the day of the exhibition. One thought alone filled my mind. 'Now,' said I, 'my father will be satisfied with me.' So, as soon as we were dismissed, I ran down the hill, rushed breathless into his office, laid the new Greek Testament, which was my prize, on his table and exclaimed: 'There, I got it!' He took up the book . . . and, evidently pleased, handed it back to me. Then, while I stood looking and waiting for him to say something which would

show that he recognized the equality of the daughter and the son, he kissed me on the forehead and exclaimed, with a sigh, 'Ah, you should have been a boy!'"

Another influence on Elizabeth Cady Stanton's feminism was her husband. When newlyweds, both went to an anti-slavery convention in London in 1840, but when the organizers decided that none of the women delegates would be allowed a delegate's seat and a vote, Mrs. Stanton had to sit in the gallery as an observer while her husband, apparently unruffled, took his rightful place on the floor among his fellow delegates.

And a less hurtful though more pervasive influence was that portion of that population of men who, Mrs. Stanton writes, having heads "about the size of an apple were the most opposed to the uprising of women, illustrating what Sidney Smith said long ago: 'There always was, and there always will be a class of men so small that, if women were educated, there would be nobody left below them.' Poor human nature loves to have something to look down upon!"

Besides the reminiscences in Eighty Years and More, portions of which I have quoted at length to give you some sense of the unaffected

yet forceful style of the author, Mrs. Stanton edited the History of Woman Suffrage (she also wrote a significant part of the first volume), she wrote numerous speeches to be delivered by her friend Susan or by herself, later, when she was no longer tied by family duties to her seven children, and, as a capstone of her career as a really radical feminist, she wrote parts of and supervised all of the "heretical" Woman's Bible, published in 1895 as a reinterpretation of biblical theology so often used to keep women in their traditional last places.

The 1896 annual meeting of the National American Woman Suffrage Association was thrown into turmoil by Mrs. Stanton's book, and one group of so-called moderate women offered a resolution that would utterly dissociate their national organization from the radical "Bible" written by the aging but ever more radical feminist. At this, Susan B. Anthony stepped down from the presiding chair to deliver this speech (I quote it here because it is most likely a version of Anthony's speech revised and rewritten by Mrs. Stanton for inclusion in an appendix to the next edition of her Bible):

"Who can tell now whether Mrs. Stanton's commentaries may not prove a great help to woman's emancipation from old superstitions

that have barred her way? Lucretia Mott at first thought Mrs. Stanton had injured the cause of all woman's other rights by insisting on the demand for suffrage [at Seneca Falls in 1848], but she had sense enough not to bring a resolution against it. In 1860 when Mrs. Stanton made a speech before the New York Legislature in favor of a bill making drunkenness a cause for divorce, there was a general cry among the friends that she had killed the woman's cause. . . . This resolution, adopted, will be a vote of censure upon the woman who is without peer in intellectual and statesmanlike ability; one who has stood for half a century the acknowledged leader of progressive thought and demand in regard to all matters pertaining to the absolute freedom of women."

This speech, like so many others the fruit of the collaboration of those two old friends, leaves little more to say. But since it does demonstrate a certain egotism on the part of its subject, let me leave you with a quotation from the History of Woman Suffrage to demonstrate the warm and loving side of Elizabeth Cady Stanton as well. "How well I remember the day I first met my life-long friend. . . . Walking home, . . . we met Mrs. Bloomer and Miss

Anthony on the corner of the street waiting to greet us. There she stood with her good earnest face and genial smile, dressed in gray silk, hat and all the same color, relieved with pale blue ribbons, the perfection of neatness and sobriety. I liked her thoroughly. . . . Thus, whenever I saw that stately Quaker girl coming across my lawn, I knew that some happy convocation of the sons of Adam were to be set by the ears, by one of our appeals or resolutions."

In that same first volume of the History of Woman Suffrage there is a short account of the Woman's Rights Convention that was held in Akron Ohio on May 28th and 29th, 1851. The presiding officer was Frances D. Gage. Her account of the great speech of Sojourner Truth is the kind of "literature" that one cannot criticize but only experience. Let me read it to you.

"The leaders of the movement trembled on seeing a tall, gaunt black woman in a gray dress and white turban, surmounted with an uncouth sun-bonnet, march deliberately into the church, walk with the air of a queen up the aisle, and take her seat upon the pulpit steps. A buzz of disapprobation was heard all over the house, and there fell on the listening ear, 'An abolition affair!' 'Woman's

rights and niggers!' 'I told you so!' 'Go it, darkey!'

"I chanced on that occasion to wear my first laurels in public life as president of the meeting. At my request order was restored, and the business of the Convention went on. Morning, afternoon and evening exercises came and went. Through all these sessions old Sojourner, quiet and reticent as in the 'Lybian Statue,' sat crouched against the wall on the corner of the pulpit stairs, her sun-bonnet shading her eyes, her elbows on her knees, her chin resting upon her broad, hard palms. At intermission she was busy selling the 'Life of Sojourner Truth,' a narrative of her own strange and adventurous life. Again and again, timorous and trembling ones came to me and said, with earnestness, 'Don't let her speak, Mrs. Gage, it will ruin us. Every newspaper in the land will have our cause mixed up with abolition and niggers, and we shall be utterly denounced.' My only answer was, 'We shall see when the time comes.'

"The second day the work waxed warm. Methodist, Baptist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Universalist ministers came in to hear and discuss the resolutions presented. One claimed superior rights and privileges for man, on the ground of 'superior intellect'; another, because of the 'manhood of Christ; if God had desired the

equality of woman, He would have given some token of His will through the birth, life, and death of the Saviour.' Another gave us a theological view of the 'sin of our first mother.'

"There were very few women in those days who dared to 'speak in meeting'; and the august teachers of the people were seemingly getting the better of us, while the boys in the galleries, and the sneerers among the pews, were hugely enjoying the discomfiture, as they supposed, of the 'strong-minded.' Some of the tender-skinned friends were on the point of losing dignity, and the atmosphere betokened a storm. When, slowly from her seat in the corner rose Sojourner Truth, who, till now, had scarcely lifted her head. 'Don't let her speak!' gasped half a dozen in my ear. She moved slowly and solemnly to the front, laid her old bonnet at her feet, and turned her great speaking eyes to me. There was a hissing sound of disapprobation above and below. I rose and announced 'Sojourner Truth,' and begged the audience to keep silence for a few moments.

"The tumult subsided at once, and every eye was fixed on this almost Amazon form, which stood nearly six feet high, head erect, and eyes piercing the upper air like one in a dream. At her first word

there was a profound hush. She spoke in deep tones, which, though not loud, reached every ear in the house, and away through the throng at the doors and windows.

"Wall, chilern, whar dar is so much racket dar must be somethin' out o' kilter. I tink dat 'twixt de niggers o' de Souf an' de wimmin at de Norf, all talkin' 'bout rights, de white men will be in a fix pretty soon. But what's all dis here talkin' 'bout?

"Dat man ober dar say dat womin needs to be helped into carriages and lifted ober ditches, and to hab de best place everywhar. Nobody eber helps me into carriages, or ober mud-puddles, or gibs me any best place!" And raising herself to her full height, and her voice to a pitch like rolling thunder, she asked, "And a'n't I a womin? Look at me! Look at my arm!" (and she bared her right arm to the shoulder, showing her tremendous muscular power). "I have ploughed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And a'n't I a womin? I could work as much an' eat as much as a man--when I could get it--and bear de lash as well! And a'n't I a womin? I have bourne thirteen chilern, and seen 'em mos' all sold off to slavery, an' when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus

heard me! And a'n't I a womin?

"Den dey talks 'bout dis ting in de head; what dis dey call it?" ("Intellect," whispered some one near.) "Dat's it, honey. What's dat got to do wid womin's rights or nigger's rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint, and yourn holds a quart, wouldn't ye be mean not to let me have my little half-measure full?" And she pointed her significant finger, and sent a keen glance at the minister who had made the argument. The cheering was long and loud.

"Den dat little man in black dar, he say wimmin can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wan't a womin! Whar did your Christ come from?" Rolling thunder couldn't have stilled that crowd, as did those deep wonderful tones, as she stood there with outstretched arms and eyes of fire. Raising her voice still louder, she repeated, "Whar did your Christ come from? From God and a womin! Man had nothin' to do wid Him." Oh, what a rebuke that was to that little man.

Turning again to another objector, she took up the defense of Mother Eve. I cannot follow her through it all. It was pointed, and witty, and solemn; eliciting at almost every sentence deafening applause; and she ended by asserting: "If de fust womin God ever made

was strong enough to turn de world upside down all alone, dese wimmin togedder--" (and she glanced her eye over the platform) "ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up agin! An' now dey is askin to do it, de men better let 'em." Long-continued cheering greeted this. "'Bleeged to ye for hearin' on me, an' now ole Sojourner han't got nothin' more to say."

Amid roars of applause, she returned to her corner, leaving more than one of us with streaming eyes, and hearts beating with gratitude. She had taken us up in her strong arms and carried us safely over the slough of difficulty, turning the whole tide in our favor. I have never in my life seen anything like the magical influence that subdued the mobbish spirit of the day, and turned the sneers and jeers of an excited crowd into notes of respect and admiration. Hundreds rushed up to shake hands with her, and congratulate the glorious old mother, and bid her God-speed on her mission of "testifyin' agin concernin' de wickedness of dis 'ere people."

I have only one anti-climactic observation and application to make, and it has to do with the relation of physical and linguistic and psychological perception. When Sojourner spoke to the argument

of "dat little man in black dar," she was probably, because of her unusually tall stature, speaking the literal physical truth. By the time she had refuted his argument--"From God an' a womin! An' man had nothin' to do wid Him!"--her use of "dat little man" had become true not only physically but morally, too. And when Frances Gage comments on the effects of Sojourner's words--"Oh, what a rebuke that was to that little man"--the meaning of "little" has become almost entirely moral. In other words, Sojourner not only carried those women and turned the tide in their favor, but elevated them in their own eyes.

This last effect is, I think, one of the most important arguments for the inclusion of women authors in any general literature course. By reading the works of their foremothers, young women--and older ones, too--will like Frances Gage and her friends find themselves elevated above their previous levels of self-evaluation; will come to perceive themselves as members of a full and equal half of the human species.

'Bliged to ye for hearin' on me.